

# Lawmakers Recognize Need for More Transportation Funding in 2002

Missouri lawmakers focused a great deal of their attention on the state's transportation system during the 2002 legislative session and acknowledged the need for more transportation funding. While most legislators agreed that Missouri needs additional funding to improve its transportation system, lawmakers found it more difficult to agree on how that funding should be generated.

On the final day of the legislative session, the General Assembly voted to place a transportation tax-increase proposal, Proposition B, on the Aug. 6 statewide election ballot. Missouri voters did not pass the measure, which would have increased the state's fuel tax by 4 cents per gallon and raised the general sales tax by one-half cent.

Although Proposition B was not approved, the issue generated an important dialogue between MoDOT, lawmakers, the public and many organizations across the state. That dialogue laid some groundwork that will be vital in the years ahead as MoDOT continues its efforts to improve Missouri's transportation system.

Despite the defeat of the tax-increase proposal, transportation in Missouri will benefit in numerous ways from several new laws approved by the General Assembly during the 2002 legislative session.

A major transportation bill, signed into law by Gov. Bob Holden on May 28, 2002, will address a number of transportation issues. The legislation eliminated the sunset date on a 6-cent-per-gallon motor-fuel tax that was approved by the General Assembly in 1992. That tax would have expired in 2008.

The bill also extends the sunset date on the aviation jet-fuel tax to Dec. 31, 2008. The tax had been set to expire in 2003. The jet-fuel sales tax is used to fund airport improvement projects throughout the state.

The legislation provides MoDOT with two ways to improve highway construction practices. Eliminating the 10-mile rule and authorizing MoDOT to use the design-build process for three pilot highway construction projects could help the department make highway construction more efficient and save administrative costs.

A measure that will allow MoDOT to prohibit the hauling of hazardous materials through tunnels on the state highway system was included in legislation to improve homeland security. Missouri currently does not have any tunnels on its state highway system, but a tunnel is planned as part of the Lambert Airport expansion project in St. Louis.

New outdoor advertising laws require a minimum of 1,400 feet between billboards on all primary and interstate highways. Currently, signs must be located at least 500 feet apart. The legislation also increases permit fees and allows tri-vision, projection and changeable message signs, all subject to MoDOT approval.

